

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 15, 2016, 6:00 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common

Present: Selectboard members Chris Martin and Andy Perchlik; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; Visitors Jenny Warshow, Diana Batzel, Tracey Hambleton, Sarah Fowler, David Warshow, Susan Abbott, James Arisman, Drew McNaughton, Jules Rabin, Anne Miller, Janet Nielsen, Angella Gibbons, Rich Phillips, Mary Leahy, Lucy Blue, Michael Trupin, Bob Popp, Paul Haskell, Jeanne Haskell, Gary Wyman, Sarah Galbraith, Tristan Von Duntz, Kathryn Trupin, Joel Trupin, Josh Gouge, Michael Schumacher, Grace Gouge, Joe Mulligan, Elisha Lloyd, Joanna Lloyd, Faith Lloyd, Kathleen Glassford, Neal Mulligan, Sandra Glassford, William Glassford, Ann Mulligan, Tabitha Glassford, Julia Mulligan, Martin Glassford

At 6:00 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Andy Perchlik

Changes to Agenda: Old Schoolhouse Common Tenant Complaint, Road Complaint

Minutes: The Selectboard approved the minutes of the March 1, 2016 meeting.

Stranahan Stewardship Management Plan: Andy explained that the Selectboard's intention wasn't to get into the actual management of the forest, but rather to help establish a better functioning committee to work on those issues. The committee has done great work but it has been 5 years and it's time to restructure.

Jules asked what the issue was with how the committee was structured. Andy explained that the committee had difficulty making decisions. He explained that the committee was initially set up to have people represent their specific areas of interest, rather than the entire town as a whole.

Andy summarized the changes to the Management Plan. He explained that the existing committee would be dissolved and current members could apply to be a member of the new committee.

Susan Abbott feels that the language regarding the conflict of interest is vague and should be narrowed down. Andy agreed that a "personal interest" would be hard to define.

Bob Popp recommended that one person from the Conservation Commission should be on the Stranahan Committee to act as liaison.

James Arisman suggested "direct financial interest" rather than "personal or professional interest."

Rich Phillips thinks the interface between the Committee and Selectboard should be more clear. There needs to be regular contact between the two boards. He feels that recommendations from the Committee need to be the result of decisions made as a board, and communicated in writing.

If a representative of the Committee is not present when the Selectboard acts on the recommendation, the Selectboard's decision should be made in writing. He also feels that oversight of the contracts should be spelled out either in the plan or the job description.

Lucy Blue suggested clarifying the language in the fourth bullet (grammatically awkward).

Diana Batzel thanked the Board for incorporating some of her previous comments. She feels that the process for making recommendations to the Selectboard and how the Selectboard responds should be delineated clearly, as well as how the contracts and leases are overseen. She also suggested changing the order of the process to revise the management plan to send it to the Vermont Land Trust earlier in the process.

Susan Abbot hopes the Board will appoint 7 members, and consider allowing members of the current committee to remain on the committee. She asked if the selection process would be open. Bobbi will check with the League of Cities and Towns to find out if any part of the process has to be private; she is not aware of anything that would be exempt from the open meeting law.

Mary Leahy asked what the committee typically does. Diana Batzel explained that they discussed logging, worked with the bike club on trails, did trail maintenance, held programs at the property, etc.

Rich Phillips explained that a conflict could arise if the plan contains too much detail about when to post agendas, when to submit minutes, etc.; he suggested changing the language to refer to the open meeting law.

Sarah Fowler feels that 7 members might be too many; it is hard to come to a consensus with 5 people and would be more difficult with 7. Anne Miller stated that she is on 2 committees with 9 members and they both function well. James Arisman feels that more people would be needed for expertise. Sarah suggested the County Forester. James feels that we are trying to get away from designated interests but we do need expertise. Jenny feels that more people on the committee means more people to share the work.

Rich feels that overseeing the leases and contracts should be in the job description. Bobbi suggested that there should be contracts for the various activities. Currently there is one lease, for sugaring, and one Memorandum of Understanding, for the bike club. The other activities have been noted in the minutes of Selectboard meetings, with no other documentation.

Jules asked if the Stranahan family has expressed any interest in the property (not through the town). He asked whether Kate Smith has any special standing with the committee. She has not attended any meetings.

Susan Abbott asked what the time frame would be to appoint members. Andy explained that the Board hasn't talked about it yet. The Board will try to finalize the plan by the next meeting.

Janet Nielsen agrees with Susan's earlier statement that it would be a mistake to throw out the entire committee. Andy agreed that the history is valuable. Mary Leahy feels that making everyone reapply makes people feel devalued. She asked that the openings be advertised on Front Porch Forum.

Peggy Bresee is upset that the Board is talking about dumping the entire committee. She doesn't feel that this is the best way to move forward. It feels antagonistic to the work that has been done. Andy explained that the moral on the committee is zero, and most people on the committee have at one time or another said they don't want to be on the committee. Peggy suggested that the Board should invite those who have worked for the forest to be members of the committee, and then fill the remaining spaces with new members. Andy doesn't think that would work because the five that were on the committee could still be on the committee, and it hasn't worked up to this point.

James Arisman feels that "we created bad feeling when something that we should be proud of wasn't honored." He feels that the people who would reapply are people who would work and would be productive members.

Janet asked what the real issue is. Jules has heard that the committee was dysfunctional and there were strong feelings on the committee. He feels that we are too gentle to speak of it. Andy feels that there was dissatisfaction within the committee and from various parts of the committee. He has heard complaints about how decisions were made.

Mary Leahy asked how such great things have been happening in the forest if the committee is so dysfunctional. Andy explained that some people have concerns about how decisions are made; people do not feel comfortable with the decision-making process. He has heard complaints about decisions being made without some members of the committee being consulted.

Diana Batzel hopes that we learn from the process that we can work together even if we disagree. She is OK with this process as long as there are good criteria going forward.

Susan Abbott stated that in the eyes of the Land Trust, we have a well-functioning town forest. She feels that there is no way to please everyone. She feels that there are ideological differences. Some people want to log from end to end. Andy stated that he has never heard anyone suggest logging from one end to the other. The people who are upset about the logging not being done were not saying that there should be more logging; they were upset about the way the decisions were being made or not made. Susan asked if the committee voted on logging. Andy said it was expected that they would vote but they didn't.

Michael Trupin agrees that if the Selectboard has committee members coming to them saying that due process is not being followed, they have to take a larger look at it. He feels that it is legitimate for the Selectboard to revise the governing document and reconstituting the committee.

Tracey Hambleton doesn't see a problem with dissolving the committee but there needs to be a clear job description and also a way to evaluate whether people are following the job description.

David Warshow feels that the current members should be encouraged to reapply as a courtesy, if they feel that they could work under the new job description.

Jules feels that the Selectboard is justified in asking members to reapply since the committee is changed.

Sarah Galbraith wonders if a clarified decision-making process could be defined, especially if the committee is not able to come to a decision among themselves.

Diana suggested that the new committee should have bylaws.

Lucy Blue suggested a process for conflict resolution.

Rich Phillips asked whether there are any activities that the committee is directly responsible for. He asked whether the Selectboard wants to be involved in every day-to-day decision about maintaining trails, etc. Andy feels that the Selectboard would approve things on a broader scale and then the committee would manage it day to day. This will be clarified.

Michael Schumacher suggested hiring a professional to prepare a plan for the forest, to avoid conflicts and personal feelings.

Anne Miller asked whether there are any areas of the management plan that deal with protection of natural resources. This could be added to the list, possibly bullet 7.

David Warshow wants to make sure it is clear that the list of recommendations is not prioritized, but needs to be balanced.

Jenny Warshow wants the job description to include protecting the beauty of the forest.

Susan Abbott asked whether there are any changes to the forest planned before the management plan is revised and the new committee is appointed. Andy stated that the Selectboard may have to do something about the flooding caused by the beavers. As far as the new bike trail is concerned, the decision will likely wait until the new committee is in place but perhaps it won't have to wait until the entire management plan is revised.

Jenny asked if the Stranahan Stewardship Committee meeting on Monday can be cancelled.
[Andy said that was up to the Committee.](#)

Andy explained that the Board will revise this draft and post it, and hopefully adopt the changes at the next meeting.

Susan thanked the committee for their hard work managing the forest.

Rich Phillips thanked the Selectboard for opening the process up to comments.

Stranahan Bike Trail: Andy feels that it would not be appropriate for the Selectboard to make a decision before the new committee is in place. There was agreement on this point and the new bike path request was tabled.

Old Schoolhouse Common: The Board received emails from Michael Schumacher, Charlene Tetreault, and Lincoln Earle-Centers to protest the new rules for use of the gym. The gym is being used by children in the community but this causes problems for the tenant in the adjoining space, Ellie Blachly. Michael understands that the Board has responded to complaints from Ellie regarding the noise, but he feels that the Board needs to hear the other side of the issue; the kids in the community need to be able to use the facility without being the subject of complaints. The kids that are using the facility are well-behaved.

Josh Gouge gives credit to Lincoln Earle-Centers for getting kids to use the facility. Lincoln has had to discontinue the after school program because of Ellie's complaints. Josh feels that it is not a reasonable expectation to think this the gym will be a quiet environment.

Michael also feels that something should be done about the fumes from Ellie's work, and he noted that the furniture that is left in the hallway is a fire hazard and against fire codes.

Bobbi stated that the town has received another complaint from Headstart regarding a time when they had rented the gym for a family activity and Elliean interaction with Ellie regarding noise. came in to demand that they keep the 2-year old quiet. They felt that she was the expectations of quietness were unreasonable in her demands and not polite for the public space.

Faith Lloyd feels that the kids that use the gym are not treated politely and they are fearful when they are in the gym because they might get yelled at if a ball goes astray.

Those present also discussed whether the age to supervise kids in the gym should be lower than the current requirement to be 18. Bobbi explained that there have been issues in the past with kids setting fires on the back porch, riding skateboards in the hall, and leaving the gas on in the kitchen. There needs to be a way to get parents to assume responsibility for what happens here. Some kids are allowed to get off the school bus unattended, and their parents pick them up later in the day.

Josh and Michael would also like to be able to use the gym more often and would like to have keys to the building. Bobbi suggested that they join the recreation committee.

Highways: Shauna from VTrans will be here at 5:30 on April 5th to discuss the annual financial plan for highways.

Chris reported that he received a complaint regarding Peacham Pond Road and the amount of maintenance that it has received over the years. Chris will talk to Dan to see what maintenance has been done in the past.

Dog Complaint: On March 5, Chris responded to another complaint about Vivian Davis's dogs. He observed the dogs chasing cars on Holt Road. Only one of the dogs was wearing the special collar. Chris spoke with Vivian in person and she indicated that the collar must not be working. She promised not to let it happen again.

On March 11, the dogs were out chasing cars again. When Chris got there, the dogs weren't out. The Board will research enforcement options.

Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste District: NEKWMD has proposed changes to their charter. The changes include increasing the NEKWMD Board's flexibility to assess fees, and removing the requirement for member towns to adopt the budget by Australian Ballot (they are the only district to require it). The budget would now be adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The Board did not take any action on the proposal.

Zoning Fees: The Board re-adopted the fee schedule that was adopted in May of 2014.

Hollister Hill Apartments: took no action

Delinquent Tax Sale: The Board approved of hiring attorney Carolyn Greaves to conduct tax sales this year.

Treasurer's Reports: Bobbi reviewed financial reports

Expenses, Permits & Payroll: Selectboard members read and signed reports for General Expenses and Payroll.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the March 15, 2016 Selectboard Meeting.
A True Record. Attest, _____, Town Clerk
